1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

hunting of any other animal); if this rule is not observed the bears will escape from their trap unharmed. Bear skins and also their gall bladders which are much sought after by the Chinese as aphrodisiacs (they fetch Rs. 5 apiece in Kalimpong) were an inducement to catch these animals when money was not plentiful or non-existent; nowadays with money from cardamum there is less economic justification for taking the risks involved. Catching small birds in snares does not count as hunting; it is one of the commonest pursuits of boys after the age of about eight, who take their catches home as presents for their mother.

ii

The agricultural land in Zongu can be divided into two categories: the land under permanent cultivation, and the land which is cleared for crops once in every eight years. The permanent cultivation is of three types; there is the *sing* or field-garden against the house, cardamum fields and rice terraces. The two latter types of cultivation, which are now of very great importance in Lepcha life, are both very modern: cardamum was introduced at the beginning of the century, rice terraces for wet paddy less than twenty years ago. Potentially this permanent cultivation has introduced a new note into Lepcha life, though so far the effect is not noticeable. Both cardamum fields and rice terraces demand a certain amount of hard initial labour, after which they acquire, as it were, a capital value; this is less true of cardamum, which needs replanting every ten years, than of the rice terraces; to build these a considerable amount of work is needed, but once they are made a heavy crop can be raised from them with relatively little labour.

Until the beginning of this century the wealth of a Lepcha household depended on the energy of its members and on the proportion of able-bodied adults to dependants—children and the old and invalid—; if there was more than one dependent to one able-bodied adult life was liable to be rather hard. Nowadays it is theoretically possible that a lazy heir of industrious ancestors might be in a better position in the community than his own industry warranted. Formerly the inevitable rule of Lepcha economy was 'from each according to his ability; to each according to his work', tempered by the co-operation and willing help which was and is freely given to those afflicted by temporary or permanent

3: Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
AK5 Lepcha AK5

Hunting and fishing among the Lepchas

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224 Hunting, which formed only a century ago a substantial part of the economy of the Lepchas[1] — the aboriginal inhabitants of the Himalayan State of Sikkim — is at present gradually decreasing in importance, in proportion with the development of agriculture and the breeding of cattle. Many of the Lepcha men still pursue hunting occasionally, but more in the way of a useful pastime and only a few professional hunters can be found nowadays.

223 224 262 The animals hunted are birds — only those, which do not feed on carrion and meat in general, being considered fit for consumption — hares, deer, musk deer, stags, bear and wild pigs. Some of these animals are hunted not only for their meat but also in order to obtain some parts of the body which are valued as medicines, e. g. the bile and liver of a bear, the bones of certain birds, etc. — Crows, rats and mice who attack the crops, are killed as well, but not eaten. Occasionally, a leopard or man-eating tiger is trapped, but their meat is not touched. The hunting of elephants and rhinos which was rather popular at one time, judging from the numerous accounts still circulating among the Lepchas, does not seem to be practised anymore.

784 177 224 A religious prohibition which is, however, not always strictly kept, exists against the killing, and especially the eating, of monkeys, who frequently invade the fields and cause considerable damage. No other *tabu* seems to exist, except the prohibition of killing a white

3: Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
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For catching jungle fowl, hares and other small game, a spring bow (*ver sak*) is set in the following way. A short piece of wood, with a broad notch in its upper part, is stuck firmly into the ground and then another piece of wood, which has a notch loosely fitting into that of the first piece, is placed into it in a horizontal position. A bamboo shoot or a small tree is bent, a string attached to it and, lastly, a sling is made, which is led over the upper, horizontal arm of the previously described device. The bait is placed on the sling and by pulling at it, the horizontal arm slips out of the vertical piece and thus releases the trap. — The same kind of trap, only in a larger size, is used for catching deer.

Another kind of sling trap used for catching jungle fowl is the so-called *ma ló*. It consists of a row of slings, made of the hair of a horse-tail, which are suspended from a fixed horizontal beam.

A Lepcha dead-fall (*kóp*) for killing jungle fowl, is constructed as follows: A string is fastened to a tree and then led over a flat stone; the string ends in a short bamboo stick, to which a bait is fastened. Then another short string is bent into a loop and its two ends are firmly fastened to the ground at the bottom of the stone and the bamboo stick with the bait is then pulled through the loop, formed by the lower string, the tension of both strings holding the stone in a tilted position. A slight movement of the bamboo piece causes the upper sling to slip out of the loop and the stone thus drops on top of the animal.

Another kind of dead-fall, which has to be set on a jungle path, is the so-called *sbil*. It consists of a heavy wooden beam, supported on one side by a lightly placed stick, which might be easily knocked down by an animal running along the path.

For catching birds, a small grill is made out of a few bamboo sticks, and is afterwards smeared with tarry birdlime (*a' yók*), obtained from a *Ficus* tree. The birdlime is usually kept ready for use in a small bamboo container (*po tek*). The grill, already smeared with bird lime, is known as *a' yók pün grim*; it is placed over

3:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
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troughs, filled with water, near springs, where birds come to drink or on the tops of trees.

An automatic spear trap (*sa lak*) is used for killing deer and sometimes a number of such traps are set, should a man-eating tiger roam around a settlement. In this case, people are warned to stay in the houses until the hunters have removed the traps again. The spear-traps are set with great care and at a certain hight, the hunter calculating the size of the tiger from its footprints. The spear-trap is made as follows: A huge bamboo tube is cut lengthwise and firmly fixed at a certain height and position with the help of several bamboo supports. Then a long piece of bamboo is fastened horizontally above the ground — at the same height of the bamboo tube — and bent strongly backwards until one end of it reaches the bamboo tube, where it is then held in its spanned position by means of a simple cock. A string is fastened to the latter and stretched low across the jungle path. At last a strong piece of bamboo, the front-end of which has been cut to a sharp point and usually poisoned, is placed in the tube as a missile. — Usually another string, also connected with the cock, is spanned breast high and further away in the direction from which a man might approach. If somebody then stumbles unaware into the trap, the missile is released beforehand without causing harm.

A small cross-bow trap (*sā lak tyăk*) is used for killing rats. It consists of a miniature cross-bow which aims into a bamboo tube, closed at its further end. The bow-string is cocked over one end of a movable bamboo stick, the other end of it, to which some bait is attached, reaching into the bamboo tube. By a slight pull at the bait, the stick, which holds back the bow-string, is moved and the arrow thus released. — It may be mentioned in this connection that poisoned food is also often laid out for killing rats, mice and other animals, who harm the crops.

Jungle fowl is sometimes caught with the help of a tent-like net. Its top is loosely hung up on a branch and its sides are fastened to the ground. On one side only, an entrance is left by lifting the flap

3: Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1953)1953
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of the net and supporting it with a stick. Some corn is placed as bait on the ground inside the net and the hunter then hides himself in a nearby bush. Should some fowl enter the net, the hunter hits the stick supporting the flap with a stone, thus closing the trap, or he simply begins to shout; the fowl flies up, the net is detached from the branch and falls on top of the prey.

While most of the before-mentioned traps can be easily handled by a single man, in some cases, especially in big game hunt, the cooperation of several hunters is necessary. Huge camouflaged pitfalls (*tüng hóng*), mostly with sharp spikes at the bottom — made of a small, but very hard kind of bamboo (*po yóng tsu*) — were constructed for trapping elephants and rhinos. For catching the latter, a spot in the jungle had to be located first, where a rhino would habitually come to answer its call of nature. Lepcha hunters claim that the rhino then usually begins to walk backwards and easily falls into a pit.

To catch leopards or tigers alive, a heavy cage with a trap door was constructed; in this case, a living bait was used. Small cages with trap doors are sometimes placed in the fields, to catch monkeys who cause damage to the crops.

The hunting of wild pigs is often carried out by a group of hunters. At first, rows of huge bamboo spikes are erected under a cliff and a number of men, forming a beating line, try to chase the wild pigs towards the cliff, from where they eventually drop on the spikes set below.

Occasionally beating lines are formed to drive animals towards a line of archers. In the driving hunt, fire is never used as the Lepchas fear that a fire in the jungle might get easily out of control and become a danger to men and their property.

Fishing

A few among the Lepchas, mostly those whose dwellings lie close to a mountain river, practise fishing, but as in hunting, fishing also